

VZCZCXRO1984
OO RUEHAST
DE RUEHPS #0575/01 1881355
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 071355Z JUL 06
FM USOFFICE PRISTINA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6281
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0754
RHMFISS/CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK
RHFMIUU/AFSOUTH NAPLES IT
RHMFIUU/CDR TF FALCON
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEPGEA/CDR650THMIGP SHAPE BE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC
RUFOANA/USNIC PRISTINA SR

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PRISTINA 000575

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR DRL, INL, EUR/SCE
NSC FOR BRAUN
USUN FOR DREW SCHUFLETOWSKI

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [UNMIK](#) [YI](#) [PREF](#)
SUBJECT: NORTH MITROVICA LEADERS CLARIFY MUNICIPAL
DECLARATIONS

REF: A. PRISTINA 518

[1](#)B. PRISTINA 531
[1](#)C. PRISTINA 519

PRISTINA 00000575 001.2 OF 002

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED, PROTECT ACCORDINGLY

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY. Two influential Kosovo Serbs from north Mitrovica clarified recent declarations issued by Kosovo's three northern Serb-majority municipalities and the Mitrovica advisory board ostensibly cutting off ties with the government in Pristina. UNMIK representatives say the declarations amount to affirmation of what they call the already-existing "soft partition" of the north. One ethnic Serb hard-liner believes that violence could ensue if KFOR continues its ongoing build-up in the north. He acknowledged that civilian defense committees are being established, but insisted they are no more than unarmed neighborhood watch units. END SUMMARY.

HARD-LINER SAYS DECLARATIONS WERE RUSHED AND UNCLEAR

[1](#)2. (SBU) During a July 3 meeting with PolOff and PolFSN, Serbian National Council (SNC) leader Nebojsa Jovic criticized three June declarations issued by Kosovo's three northern Serb-majority municipalities (Zvecan, Leposavic and Zubin Potok) formally cutting ties with Pristina's Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG) (Ref A). He said that the declarations were meant to encourage the Kosovo Police Service (KPS) to do a better job at preventing and solving crimes. However, he said the declarations were hasty and poorly thought out. He said northern leaders have never recognized the PISG, and there is nothing new about that. He added that it was illogical for the mayors to demand that crimes against Serbs be solved, while simultaneously saying in the declarations that regional police units cannot come to the north to investigate those crimes. He tempered his criticisms of the declarations by

saying they grew out of the realities faced by Kosovo Serbs, which he also said Belgrade does not fully understand.

13. (SBU) Jovic said that the declarations' call for "self-defense committees" was poorly explained and formulated, and has therefore been misunderstood by the international community as paramilitary and "evil." He said the committees will be unpaid, volunteer corps of citizens that will operate like a neighborhood watch, observing potential trouble-spots and notifying the police of incidents. He said they will not be uniformed or armed.

14. (SBU) Although Jovic strongly criticized the declarations as tactical position papers, he took little issue with their substance. He said that although he was not personally at the rally in Zvecan on June 5 when the first declaration was announced, he believes that Mitrovica regional coordinator of the Kosovo Coordination Center (CCK) Momir Kasalovic got carried away during the speeches and announced incorrectly that Zvecan was breaking ties with both the PISG and with UNMIK. (NOTE. Kasalovic has denied he made such a statement, blaming an erroneous translation (Ref A). END NOTE). Jovic said that, "the SNC quickly fixed the problem" because cutting off ties with UNMIK would be a mistake that would only widen the political space for Kosovo Serb leaders like Oliver Ivanovic and his Serbian List for Kosovo and Metohija (SLKM). (COMMENT. Jovic believes Oliver Ivanovic and other relative moderates continually work against the interests of Kosovo Serbs, most recently by making an independent proposal on decentralization during status negotiations (Ref B). Jovic said that only the Belgrade status negotiating team can speak for Kosovo Serbs and that the SNC makes its proposals directly to the team through their E.O.-listed representative Marko Jaksic. END COMMENT.).

NORTHERN SERBS PAYING CLOSE ATTENTION

PRISTINA 00000575 002 OF 002

15. (SBU) Jovic said that right now Kosovo Serbs have everything to lose and that it is a critical time when every action and word must be carefully measured and thought out in advance. He said that he does not believe status talks will lead to independence and said Kosovo Serbs must use all possible diplomatic means to prevent that result. He said northern Kosovo Serbs worry that the recent increased KFOR presence north of the Ibar is part of a build-up leading to independence, and he said that if troop levels continue to rise, so will fear levels, which he believes could lead to violence (Ref C).

16. (SBU) Jovic said that he is in "constant contact" with UNMIK Civil Police (CIVPOL) Mitrovica Regional Commander Gary Smith, and said he does all that he can to reduce tensions in northern Mitrovica. He supports ongoing engagement with Kosovo Albanians, and recently participated in a retreat in Montenegro to foster ongoing dialogue, sponsored by Norway.

17. (SBU) On June 23 the Advisory Board to UNMIK,s Administration in Mitrovica (UAM) issued a declaration echoing those issued earlier by the three northern municipalities. However, on July 3 the UAM Advisory Board Chairman and Mitrovica representative of the Kosovo Coordination Center (CCK) Srboljub Milenkovic clarified for PolOff and PolFSN that although the media widely reported that the board was cutting ties with the PISG, in fact the board was only supporting the declarations by the three northern municipalities. He said that the role of the advisory board is to advise UNMIK on issues related to Mitrovica, and it has no ties with the PISG in any event. (NOTE. In addition to his appointed positions, Milenkovic was an elected member of the parliament of Serbia and Montenegro until the dissolution of the state union last month. END NOTE.). There are eight members on the advisory

board, including six Serbs, one Albanian and one Bosniak. According to UNMIK Mitrovica Municipal Representative Joe Kazlas, only the six Serbs signed the declaration.

UNMIK SEES DECLARATIONS AS REFLECTING "SOFT PARTITION"

18. (SBU) UNMIK's Kazlas told PolOff and PolFSN on July 3 that the declarations by the three northern municipalities reflect an ongoing reality, not a call for dramatic change. He said he has taken to describing that reality in internal UNMIK reporting as "soft partition," by which he means a situation in which bureaucrats in the north calmly ignore all directives from Pristina. He said that if a decentralization plan is approved that allows direct financial links between Belgrade and Serb municipalities that completely bypass Pristina institutions, then soft partition could last forever.

19. (SBU) Kazlas said Kosovo Serbs can live with soft partition, and therefore do not need violence. However, the said the self-defense committees are being established to respond to possible provocations by Kosovo Albanians. Kazlas said one has already been activated in Zvecan, and is using an old brick factory in Zikovac as its base. He said that most of the members seem to be unemployed Trpca miners. CivPol sources confirmed that there is a self-defense unit head-quartered at the brick factory. On a July 7 visit to the factory, DATT saw about twenty people cleaning and doing minor refurbishments; one of these workers claimed that about 200 members of an unarmed security force (including some former military) are expected next month.

10. (U) Post clears this message in its entirety for release to Special Envoy Marti Ahtisaari.
GOLDBERG